



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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CONVICTED PAKISTANI ARMS TRAFFICKER ARRESTED AGAIN ON NEW ARMS EXPORT CHARGES

LOS ANGELES – A Pakistani national convicted of illegally exporting HAWK missile parts to Iran nearly 20 years ago made his initial appearance in federal court here today to face new charges that he has illegally exported components for U.S.-fighter jet engines, announced Michael J. Garcia, the Department of Homeland Security Assistant Secretary for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Arif Ali Durrani, 55, arrived at Los Angeles International Airport yesterday aboard a flight from Mexico City en route to Pakistan. Upon his arrival, special agents from ICE arrested Durrani pursuant to a sealed indictment and arrest warrant issued in the Central District of California in May 1999. The indictment against Durrani resulted from an extensive investigation by ICE agents in Oxnard, California that began in 1993.

The indictment, which was unsealed at his court appearance today, charges Durrani with two counts of violating the Arms Export Control Act. Specifically, the indictment alleges that Durrani's now defunct company, Lonestar Aerospace in Ventura, California, illegally exported more than 100 compressor blades for the General Electric J-85 military aircraft engine to foreign customers in 1994.

The J-85 military aircraft engine is the primary power source for the F-5E "Tiger II" fighter jet and the U.S. T-38 "Talon" trainer aircraft. The compressor blades for this engine are classified as "defense articles" by the United States, making their export subject to strict controls.

By law, anyone attempting to export U.S. defense articles must be registered with the State Department's Office of Defense Trade Controls and must apply for and receive a license or other approval for export of the defense articles. The indictment alleges that Durrani exported these defense articles without the required license or approval from the State Department.

"Durrani once again stands accused of illegally exporting American military components. By arresting illegal arms dealers, particularly those with a history of selling U.S. military hardware to state sponsors of terrorism, ICE is helping to keep sensitive U.S. weapons technology from falling into the wrong hands," said Michael J. Garcia, Department of Homeland Security Assistant Secretary for Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Today's case marks the second time that ICE agents have arrested Durrani on arms export violations.

In October 1986, ICE agents in Connecticut arrested Durrani on charges that he had illegally exported U.S. defense articles without the required State Department license. Specifically, Durrani was accused of illegally exporting guidance systems for the HAWK anti-aircraft missile from the United States to Iran.

At trial, Durrani unsuccessfully argued that his actions were part of a U.S. government-sanctioned covert operation in connection with the Iran-Contra affair. Among other claims, Durrani alleged that his illegal arms shipments to Iran were authorized by Lt. Colonel Oliver North, the former National Security Council aide.

On April 2, 1987, a federal jury in Connecticut found Durrani guilty on three counts of violating the Arms Export Control Act and the accompanying International Traffic in Arms Regulations in connection with his illegal exports. Durrani was subsequently barred by the State Department from exporting any defense articles from the United States.

Durrani served his prison sentence and was released from prison in September 1992. The former U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service then sought to deport Durrani based upon his conviction. In January 1998, Durrani voluntarily left the United States. It is believed that he has been living in Mexico since that time.

Mexican law enforcement officials arrested Durrani on June 12, 2005 for being in Mexico illegally. Durrani was being deported to his native Pakistan when ICE agents met his connecting flight in Los Angeles Wednesday afternoon and took him into custody.

If convicted of the new charges against him, Durrani could face a potential maximum sentence of 20 years incarceration and a \$2 million fine. It is important to note that an indictment contains mere allegations. All defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty in a court of law.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.